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# *The Kulu Valleys in Motion*<sup>1</sup>

Walter Coward

## ABSTRACT

The valleys that comprise the Kulu District of Himachal Pradesh are in motion—agricultural and pastoral activities are changing, tourism is expanding rapidly, protected areas are being established and hydroelectric projects are being planned and built. In the valleys of Kulu District there is an unusual conjunction of these diverse state and national projects, with several changes occurring at once. As is true elsewhere, change is patchy and costs and benefits uneven. Especially important are the different opportunities that arise for those people in areas served by roads versus those in areas of the district who remain engaged in a walking economy. The Kulu valleys are layered with the sacred domains of the village gods, the remnants of past government policies and programs, earlier property regimes, and constructed landscapes, such as grazing areas, grain fields, and apple orchards. As with other upland and mountainous regions, the present state of the Kulu valleys reflects both the actual and remembered past and the imagined and intended future.

## Introduction

The districts of the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh are highly dissimilar. The diversity of social groups and the variety of natural habitats found within and across these districts create a palette of district-level political economies, with some similarities reflecting their common location in the state of Himachal and the nation of India. Kulu is one of the well known districts of the state—a popular destination for ancient and modern Indian travelers as well as an expanding number of foreigners. It also has become well known for its production of apples and other fruits.

This essay is about several changes that are unfolding in the Kulu Valleys. Some, like changes in the horticultural sector, have been underway for decades while others are more recent, such as the numerous hydroelectric projects now underway. Many of these changes are also occurring in other districts of Himachal Pradesh, but there is an unusual conjunction of processes in the Kulu Valleys. Change seldom occurs evenly, and in the Kulu Valleys the trajectory of change in those parts served by the road network is

quite unlike that in areas that remain roadless and engaged in a pedestrian economy.

## The Setting of the Kulu Valleys

The Kulu Valleys include the main valley formed by the Beas River, which connects the towns of Manali, Kulu to Bhuntar, and Banjar as well as the various valleys formed by its tributaries. The main Kulu Valley is flanked by a number of smaller valleys with villages that are included in the social, economic, and ritual networks of the region.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This way of imagining the region seems consistent with the writing of Chetan Singh concerning the historical Kulu: "The core of the Kulu territory lay in the valleys of the Beas river and its tributaries" and "Essentially the political and economic strength of Kulu was derived from the peasantry of the Beas and its tributary valleys" (1998:17).

Likewise, T.V. Singh (1989:47) has said this about the area: "More noticeable are the spurs of these encircling mountains that play out into the lower parts of the valley subsiding into lengthened sweep of arable land as they approach the Beas, and often they separate the inner valleys from one another giving them individuality and marked eco-cultural identity. Each of these valleys has developed its eco-cultural profile adding to the composite personality of the Kulu Valley. . . ." I am calling this region the Kulu Valleys.

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the motion metaphor from my colleague Arjun Appadurai who has written so lucidly about our world in motion. See his book, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996).

Kulu District, more or less equivalent to the Kulu Valleys, covers an area of 5,503 square kilometers. Census counts in 1881 reported a population of only 38,000, which grew to 46,000 in 1911 (Tucker 1997:25). The latest population figures (Census of India 1991) indicated a total of just over 300,000 people.<sup>3</sup>

The Kulu Valleys lie between the Dhauladhar and Great Himalaya ranges and have only a limited area of agricultural lands. This situation has made herding and trading essential elements in the economy of the Kulu Valleys (Singh 1998). Historically, most people relied on an agropastoral livelihood strategy, cultivating crops, raising animals for meat, milk and wool, and collecting various forest products. Many still do. This agropastoral system produced items for trade for things either not produced locally or in short supply. Those close to trade routes often shaped their choice of crops to cultivate, animal products to produce, or forest items to collect in response to market opportunities. Some made trade a major element of their livelihood strategy.<sup>4</sup> Rulers and elected governments alike constructed an assortment of ways to tax these activities.

Market links require some form of economically suitable transportation. Historically, communities and leaders both invested in the development of trails and bridges, and local people acquired pack animals. Since its establishment, the state of Himachal Pradesh has invested heavily in the extension and improvement of its highway system, with very significant assistance from the national government because of the state's strategic border location. One consequence of this road building strategy is that there are two Himachals—or in the case of the Kulu Valleys, two Kulu Valleys: those hamlets and households that have close and easy access to roads and those that are distant.<sup>5</sup> Proximity to the road network creates new economic opportunities—and perhaps risks—not experienced by those dependent on walking trails and bridle paths.

In this region of the oldest principality of Himachal Pradesh, founded in the first century of the Christian era (Singh 1989:48), traditional land uses such as agriculture

and animal husbandry are shifting, as new land uses to provide accommodations and other services to tourists, to create environmentally protected areas, and to produce hydroelectric power develop.

### Apples and the new horticulture

Agricultural arrangements in the Kulu Valleys were once much like patterns elsewhere in the region now known as Himachal Pradesh. Singh (1998) provides us with a view of the manner in which settled cultivators, herders both migratory and village-based, and state institutions aligned to establish governance and production systems that worked:

The village peasantry, the pastoralists and the state were entwined in an intricate relationship of economic independence. A variety of customary rights, dues and obligations existed which, though not always explicitly defined in legal documents, were well understood by all parties (1998:135).

These longstanding entwined relationships are being rapidly altered in some parts of the Valleys. The shift to orcharding in the Kulu Valleys is not just an additional economic activity in the repertoire of livelihoods for that region. Rather, it is a profound shift that is changing the customary economic arrangements in which herders have been key elements in the overall regional production system.

As recently summarized by a team of Indian and Canadian researchers (Berkes and Gardner 1997), the Kulu Valleys are shifting from an agropastoralism to horticulture. And now the horticultural sector itself is undergoing additional changes as some orchard lands are being converted to vegetable production. Also, as noted above, the agricultural economy of the region is increasingly buttressed by tourism and associated activities such as handloom weaving for market sale.

### Apples

For the past forty years apples have been the icon of the horticultural revolution in the Kulu Valleys; now, a second generation of horticultural changes is underway. But first, let us examine the apple narrative.

The apple story begins during the British Colonial period when settlers, missionaries and others began introducing familiar crops from their home area into this temperate region of India. These settlers not only planted the initial orchards but also pushed the colonial government to improve transportation to facilitate the marketing of the fruit.

The colonial Punjab government, responsible for the Kulu Valleys, undertook some of the first government activities in support of apple production. The government of

<sup>3</sup> Since the early population counts, Kulu District was reduced in size when the Lahaul-Spiti region was created as a separate district, thus increasing the current density of population. The state of Himachal Pradesh covers an area of 55,673 square kilometers and in 1991 had a population of 5.1 million.

<sup>4</sup> For an interesting discussion of historical patterns of trade in the region and the importance of various trading communities see Minhas (1998).

<sup>5</sup> This point is illustrated in a recent news item in the Chandigarh *Tribune* on December 19, 2000. It was reported that the residents of the Kharal valley, on the eastern side of Kulu town, were complaining about being left out because of the lack of roads, poor bus service and inadequate drinking water for their villages.

Himachal Pradesh has put in place a number of policies and programs to encourage the expansion of apple production, and other horticultural crops (Sharma 1996). These activities, which have now spanned more than four decades, have been remarkably sweeping and comprehensive. In the early 1960s a separate Department of Horticulture was created by the state government along with a training center and periodic training camps. A decade later the state created the Horticulture Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation to establish a post-harvest infrastructure. This included grading, packing, and storage facilities, as well as the construction of link roads. Himachal Pradesh also boasts one of the few horticultural universities in the world, the Y.S. Parmar Horticulture University.

Both large, small, and marginal producers were given incentives to switch to horticulture. For example, large landowners could retain more of their lands by converting some of the area, usually their least productive fields, to orchards while small cultivators and the landless were given marginal lands to plant with fruit trees. Also very important for many small producers was the availability of cheap and subsidized food grains to cover the household's food gap as grain fields were converted to not-yet-producing orchards. A range of other subsidies was available to all to assist with the costs of nursery plants, preparation of orchard lands and purchase of new implements. This state effort, matched by positive market opportunities, has supported the fundamental shift that many agriculturists in the Kulu Valleys undertook.

Studies of four villages in the Kulu Valleys, two by Sharma (1996) and two by Berkes and Gardner (1997), show that many cultivators with easy access to road transportation now devote a smaller portion of their land to the production of food grains and a larger area to fruit trees, primarily apples. They now purchase more of their food grains than before. They have also significantly altered their livestock activities by reducing the number of sheep and goats they own and replacing local milk cows with "improved" animals.

These four villages may never have been fully self-sufficient in foodstuffs; certainly they are not now. Rather, like many other rural households around the world, they are food-buyers while also continuing to produce food and other agricultural products for themselves and for distant consumers.

Lately, apple production has begun to decline in orchards located at lower elevations. While there is no clear reason for this there are several possible explanations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The sources for this discussion include several scientists from the Y.S. Parmar Horticulture University who are based in the Kulu Valleys as well as individual growers and officers of the

There is a wide spread belief that temperatures have risen in the lower portion of the main Kulu Valley in recent years; reference to global warming is common.<sup>7</sup> Many see this as the cause of lower apple yields. Others point to the age of many orchards and the need to replace trees with fresh stock. There also is concern that pollination is no longer adequate because of the ill effects of pesticides on natural pollinators. Further, the dwindling size of orchards may be making them less economically viable and thus subject to less careful management. Whatever the causes, both research scientists and growers are taking actions, including searching for new apple varieties suitable to current climate conditions.

A new horticultural revolution is also underway. One element is that growers in higher elevations who previously had not developed apple and other orchards are now doing so. The second element is that those with orchards at lower elevations have begun converting those orchards to intensively farmed vegetable plots. This vegetable production is facilitated by the market orientation of these growers, the scientific information and assistance available from the university and government staff, and important physical and social infrastructure including road transport and local wholesale vegetable markets.

This new horticulture of cauliflower, broccoli, peas, garlic, tomatoes, and even flowers is especially visible along the main roads around Bhuntar in the lower portion of the main Kulu Valley. Vegetable production provides some advantage to the smaller farmers because it is very labor intensive and larger growers may have difficulty finding needed labor. It can also be an advantage to the small growers because the multiple crops and their quick production provide a better cash flow than does an annual fruit harvest. This new horticulture is potentially profitable because it allows the production of these crops for sale in the large urban markets of Delhi and elsewhere, during the summer months when there is no competing production in the lowlands.

In short, horticulture is a key element of the farm economy of those growers in the Kulu Valleys who have access to road transport. Moreover, it is a highly dynamic sector in which farmers are continually looking for the next

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fruit growers association. No "hard" research evidence was presented in any of these interviews. Subsequent correspondence with Dr. James Hunter, Director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York indicated that a small change in temperature could have a large impact in areas where previous temperatures were close to the minimum needed as the chilling requirement of the apple tree to break dormancy.

<sup>7</sup> Vedwan and Rhoades (2001) have discussed how apple farmers in the Kulu Valleys perceive climate change with regard to their apple production.



promising crop. This somewhat frenzied pace of change is spawned by the cultivators' own innovative attitudes and abetted by the locally based market and research institutions.

### Accommodating Visitors

The Kulu Valleys have long entertained visitors, but in the past, these have been merchants and religious pilgrims. Now they entertain a new brand of visitor—the tourist, mainly from other parts of India.

In large part this tourism flows from the deliberate policies and programs of the Himachal Pradesh government in support of the tourism sector. In recent years, it has also benefited from the unexpected decline of tourism in Kashmir. By 1995, more than 15 million domestic tourists visited Himachal Pradesh. Shimla, the state capital, and the Kulu-Manali area are the two most popular destinations (Kuniyal et al. 2000). The Kulu Valleys have experienced much of the phenomenal growth in tourism that has occurred in Himachal. Annual visitors have increased from 40,000 in the 1970s to more than 1.5 million in the early 1990s (Kumer 1995). By 1998, there were 363 hotels and guesthouses in Manali and 94 in Kulu (Kuniyal et al. 2000).

In August 1998, the *Tribune*, a major English-language paper in Chandigarh, carried an article entitled "Tourism Tramples Manali Environment" that made the point that in the absence of effective regulatory measures the "phenomenal" growth in tourism was putting the local environment at risk.

As noted in the *Tribune* article, it might have been expected that the state's Town and Country Planning Department would help to alleviate, even avoid such problems. The state legislation, which guides the work of this department, divides the entire state into several geographical regions for planning purposes. One of these regions is the Kulu valley planning area, a 150-square kilometer corridor-like planning unit which includes the towns of Kulu and Manali, and is about 80 kilometers in length but only a kilometer or two in width. This planning unit has three urban places—Kulu, Manali, and Bhuntar—and 40 rural settlements. The Town and Country Planning Department office in Kulu is responsible for re-creating a plan for this entire "region." The execution of the components of such a plan would be the responsibility of the local government units as well as the state's technical agencies. Because some investors have avoided construction rules by building in the zones governed by the rural *panchayats*, rather than the urban areas that have somewhat more demanding procedures, the ability to plan for the entire Kulu-Manali corridor, both its urban and rural places, is essential. The rural areas around Manali have resisted being included in the municipality for various reasons, including the loss of

some government subsidies that they enjoy as rural places.

The absence of such an overall plan has contributed to a great deal of uncontrolled growth and construction in the Kulu-Manali area. In the spring of 1995 the High Court of Himachal Pradesh, acting in response to a public interest case raising alarms about the impact of hotel construction on the riparian area, ordered a halt to all construction within 500 meters of the Beas river. This was a necessary decision, but one with many practical problems since in places the Beas Valley is not much more than a kilometer wide.<sup>8</sup> More recently the Town and Country Planning Department has also had to deal with a ban on further construction in Manali that has been imposed by the State's Council of Ministers. Its task is to develop additional guidelines for future construction.

Many of these problems were anticipated in research completed more than a decade ago. In 1989, T. V. Singh published a study of the growing tourism industry in the Kulu Valleys. His account provides a thorough discussion of the need for tourism development in the Kulu Valley to align with both the cultural and environmental resources of this unusual region. Regrettably, his observations about the need for more careful planning for the growth of tourism in Manali seem to have been overwhelmed by the continued increase in visitors and subsequent decisions taken and not taken.

Since Singh's research in the 1980s a new approach to tourism that is being advocated by some is community-based ecotourism (CBET). This approach is concerned both with conserving the environment and with ensuring direct financial and other benefits to local communities. This has not been a major thrust of Himachal's tourism strategy. In an effort to help disperse tourist accommodations, avoid the negative impacts of large-scale construction, and create greater local employment effects, the State has made some effort to help small, local investors enter the tourism sector (Kuniyal et al., 2000:190-191).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Along with its halt order, the High Court also directed that an expert committee be created to examine the matter and report back to it. This was completed in November 1998 with the recommendation that the prohibited distance be 125 meters on each side. The Court accepted that recommendation and assigned implementation to the Department.

<sup>9</sup> One of the better examples of community-based tourism in the Himalayan region involves the Sherpa communities surrounded by Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park in Nepal. Local people here have participated in and benefited from the tourism economy through employment and the investments they have made in lodges, restaurants, shops, and pack animals. As Stevens (1993:370) notes, tourism has offered "the means to diversify their economic activities and to decrease their dependence on Khumbu [the Sherpa name for this region] resources for their

DeCoursey (1998) has discussed the possibilities of CBET in a newer tourism destination for the Kulu Valleys, the Great Himalaya National Park (GHNP). While few tourists have yet visited the park itself, people are beginning to visit the group of villages that lie in the Ecodevelopment Zone (the EZ) on the Park's western boundary. Currently, local responses have included the establishment of a few private guesthouses, the provision of porter and guide services, and craft production. The level of tourism activity thus far is only a minor part of the economy of the GHNP area.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of the Himachal Pradesh Tourist Development Corporation and the Department of Forestry, no outsiders have yet invested in tourism facilities in the GHNP area.

The weaving of woolen products, such as shawls, blankets, and hats, has long been a part of the household and exchange economy of the region. Now, as part of the tourism industry, there is a large number of shops in the Kulu valleys selling Kulu shawls and related woolen items. There are estimates that as many as 9,000 people are employed in the handloom sector, some of them through well-organized entities such as the Bhuttico Weavers Cooperative.

However, there are two somewhat surprising facts concerning these popular Kulu shawls. First, practically none is made with local wool. Local wool is not used because of its poor quality; nearly all of the products sold are produced from wool imported from Australia. Second, many of the shawls sold to tourists are not handmade in the Kulu valleys but are machine made in factories located in Punjab and elsewhere. This is true despite a State law intended to protect artisans. The Handloom Reservation Law makes it illegal to produce and sell certain items woven with power looms. Thus, while it may appear that tourism is providing important opportunities for the sale of products made by local artisans, many uninformed visitors are purchasing items manufactured outside the area.

### **The Proposed Conservation Economy**

Throughout India a number of protected areas, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries have been established under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, as amended in 1991 (Kothari et al. 1996). The wildlife wing of the forest departments in each state manages these pro-

ected areas. The newest of the national parks is the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) created in the region of the Kulu Valleys and covering the upper catchment areas of the Tirthan, Sainj, Parvati, and Jiva rivers.<sup>11</sup>

The GHNP covers an area of 754 square kilometers overlaid on 13 different forests, which have been under the management of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. Five are reserved, or strictly protected forests. The remaining eight are Class II protected forests in which various customary practices by villagers are permitted.

These traditional activities have become a highly contested matter. Protected areas imply things to be protected and activities to be protected against. The Himachal Wildlife Project, initiated in the 1970s, identified a rich and special habitat – something to be protected – in this portion of the Kulu Valleys. It also claimed that patterns of resource use by local communities were spoiling this habitat – something to be protected against. In 1984 the government gave its first indication of interest in the establishment of the Great Himalayan National Park and by 1987 had prepared an initial ten-year management plan.

Livestock pressures have long been presumed by the Forest Department to negatively influence the condition of the forests in Himachal despite the paucity of the evidence. Thus, it is unsurprising that herding was quickly identified as a problem for the habitat (Saberwal 1999).<sup>12</sup> The collection of wild plants also came to be seen as a major negative resource practice (DeCoursey 1997) and by 1997 this new “problem” for which little hard evidence exists became a further rationale for establishing the Park.

But there is a very important point to understand con-

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<sup>11</sup> The current Director of the GHNP and the associated wildlife sanctuaries is a staff member of the Wildlife Wing of Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. However, it is interesting to note that the management of GHNP is actually the responsibility of a registered society called the Biodiversity Conservation Society. This Society which is affiliated with the Forest Department has its own board of directors, chaired by the state Minister of Forests.

<sup>12</sup> Subsequent research has called into doubt these livestock assumptions. Research by the Society for the Advancement of Village Economy (SAVE) has documented the procedures used by local people for grazing their livestock and for collecting minor forest products. In sharp contrast with a more standard narrative, SAVE's information indicates the sound use of natural resources by the local communities (a 1997 report cited by Baviskar, 2000). A second research piece is by Richard (2000) of the International Center for Integrated Mountain Research and Development in which she observes that excessive overgrazing was not a problem in the area. The latter research piece was one of a number of studies conducted under the auspices of the Wildlife Institute of India and funded as part of the World Bank's support to GHNP. Overall, this was a very strong research effort in support of the Park's development, though in the end, Park policies often were influenced by factors other than these reports.

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basic subsistence”. Unfortunately, Stevens does not provide any insights as to what public policies or other factors have led to the exclusion of outside capital investing in this area and overwhelming the local investments. See also Brower (1991) for a parallel discussion of the impact of tourism on the Sherpa of Khumbu.

<sup>10</sup> The Himachal Pradesh Tourist Development Corporation is reported to be giving more attention to tourism strategies that reflect community interests (Gupta and Shah 1999). This has included some support for farm families to upgrade their houses to accommodate visitors.

cerning these customary practices that are seen by some as detrimental. Unlike other regions of India, in Kulu District, and other parts of Himachal Pradesh, some villagers had specified rights to the use of forest lands for grazing and collecting fuelwood and medicinal plants, rights that had been legally recognized and recorded in the Forest Settlement report prepared in 1886 by A. Anderson. And in the ensuing years, many other users had established *de facto* rights in the Class II forests. Consequently, as part of the Park's establishment, the government needed to acquire the codified rights and to compensate the rights-holders, either with one-time payments or by making similar resources available elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

For a long period, the government took little action to resolve these rights issues. Then an unexpected twist occurred. In 1997 the Supreme Court of India, acting on a case filed by the World Wildlife Fund-India concerning the unsatisfactory settlement of rights in protected areas throughout India, issued an order requiring that all such settlements be completed within one year. Consequently, the government of Himachal acted quickly and reported by May 1999 that all existing resource rights within the Park area had been identified and settlements made with the individual rights holders.

In the case of grazing rights, the government has "settled" these rights by agreeing to find alternative pastures for all concerned, some within two wildlife sanctuaries that are a part of the GHNP. This seems to be an unlikely remedy, with the existence of grazing rights in all other available forestlands and the impossibility of finding alternatives to the unique alpine pastures in the GHNP now unavailable. Moreover, only a small number of rights holders are being compensated. Approximately 349 persons judged to be the descendants of the actual rights holders mentioned in the Anderson settlement will receive payments. No compensation is planned for those many others who had established *de facto* collecting rights in the years after the 1886 Settlement.

### The Ecodevelopment Zone

As the Park authorities move to extinguish the various forest resource rights held by local people they also are proposing substitutes. Focused attention is being given to the group of villages that are situated on the western edge of the park. An area of 326.6 square kilometers encompassing approximately 130 hamlets has been designated

by the Forest Department as an Ecodevelopment Zone (EZ), or what others might call a buffer zone. It is estimated that 1,600 households with 16-18,000 people reside in these hamlets. The Ecodevelopment Zone is a concept being used throughout India to address "the livelihood problems of people surrounding protected areas" (Kothari et al. 1996:34). In the case of the GHNP, the intention is to assist this group of villagers, many of whom had created *de facto* use rights, to deal with the elimination of access to forest resources in the Park area while substituting new livelihood activities that reduce the use of resources found in the new protected areas. Some of these new opportunities might relate to the needs and interests of expected Park visitors.

To understand the challenges of this EZ approach we need to know more about the livelihood activities of the EZ villages and their relationship to the GHNP resources. Historically, the Inner Saraj region of the Kulu Valleys, where much of the EZ lies, was a poor region because of the scarcity of suitable agricultural lands. Its inhabitants often sought additional grain from upper Kulu, at one point through the production and exchange of opium (Singh, 1998: 185, 195).

The EZ is a nearly roadless area and local people have built a pedestrian economy based on an infrastructure of trails and pathways. Roads connecting this region with the rest of the district end at the western perimeter of the EZ. The walking economy has several elements. One is the agricultural element largely based on the production of grains in the summer and winter for home consumption. Two other elements of the by-foot economy rely heavily on the use of the forests—animal husbandry and the collection of forest products. Herding depends on grazing and the collection of grasses for fodder in the forests, including the use of alpine meadows that lie outside the EZ and within the Park's boundaries. The collection of forest products includes both the gathering of high-value medicinal plants as well as bamboo and other wood used to make agricultural and weaving tools, household and religious items. Some of this forest use was based on "settlement" rights while for other users it was the exercise of *de facto* rights unregulated by the Forest Department.

All of these customary activities can be conducted in a walking economy. Herds can be moved without roads and collecting can be done in small, or light-weight, amounts that can be transported by animals (even sheep and goats) or on one's back. The pedestrian economy of the zone also partly explains the lack of involvement by various main-line agencies such as Agriculture, Horticulture, or Irrigation since their development strategies all assume the availability of roads to reach markets. An important observation is that this road-led strategy of development in Himachal has provided some remedies for forest despoilment—once the apple crate problem was corrected and with

<sup>13</sup> The GHNP recognizes these issues and has written the following on its Home Page ([www.wii.gov.in/ghnpindia.htm](http://www.wii.gov.in/ghnpindia.htm)): "[I]t is increasingly recognized as neither politically feasible nor ethically justifiable to attempt to deny the poor the use of natural resources without providing them with alternative means of livelihood".



the exception of the continuation of logging by the forest corporation.

Since road building is not currently planned for the EZ, attempts to minimize the forest dependency of these hamlets will have to be based on substitute activities and products consistent with the on-foot style of transport used in this walking and pack animal economy. Weaving products may be one such example, along with apricot oil and so on. Another option might be the trekking tourism so popular in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project [ACAP] in Nepal.<sup>14</sup>

In short, the EZ represents what we might call the "other Himachal"—the portion of the State, or in this case the portion of the Kulu Valleys, that has not participated significantly in either the horticultural or tourism booms that have reached the roaded areas. Such pockets are found throughout the State, but the EZ now has special stresses. Not only has it been ignored by the standard development approaches of the state but it is also now being separated from its long-standing natural resource base.

Within the EZ villages some families are more dependent on the resources within the Park than are others; typically, the less well off are the most dependent. As Baviskar (in press) has written, it has been the larger landowners and those proximate to roads who have become less dependent on the forests as they have become involved in the new horticultural opportunities.

Poor households in the EZ villages use forest resources in three broad ways. Landless households collect bamboo, and small amounts of wood and grasses to fashion into agricultural and household tools and utensils. The sale of these items is their only source of income. A significant number of households, including the poor, collect medicinal plants. This has become a major source of cash income for villagers. And third, as Richard (1999) has written, livestock is the backbone<sup>15</sup> of the EZ villages as well as the migratory herders who come to the region in the summer months.<sup>16</sup> In the EZ it is the herders of villages located at the higher elevations, and more distant from the roads, who keep the larger flocks of sheep and goats since their locations do not favor either traditional grain crops or the new

horticulture options. To raise their animals, both the EZ residents and the migratory herders depend upon a geographically dispersed set of grazing resources both inside and outside the Park boundaries. Within the Park, the alpine meadows for which the herders have held grazing rights are especially important for the summer pasturing of sheep. They both provide critical forage in this season and relieve the sheep of disease and other heat-related stresses at lower elevations.

The ecodevelopment approach, which assumes ending rights or shifting them to other unspecified locations, appears to put the poor at greater risk because of its negative consequences for the continuation of viable components of their livelihoods (Richard 1999).<sup>17</sup>

Severed from the natural resources to which they previously had access rights, residents, especially the poor, find that the economic options are worse, not better, and will only be improved with far more substantial and effective assistance. As of now, it is difficult to imagine that any of those who have lost their resource rights will have a brighter future.<sup>18</sup> But finding sound economic alternatives in the face of the loss of these resource rights that have been so central to the core economic activities of the region will be no easy task.

It is interesting to compare the strategies for change

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<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it remains unclear that ending these resource use activities is necessary for the Park's environmental well-being. For example, Saberwal, based on his study of Gaddi pastoralists based in the Kangra area, thinks ending grazing may not be required. He concluded that the impact of Gaddi grazing practices on species diversity was "highly localized and insignificant at the level of the overall landscape" (1996:747). From this research he also provides the following pertinent suggestion: "Rather than intensifying current attempts to keep people out of protected areas, conservation agencies should turn their energies to documenting the biological resources that exist under current forms of land use, both within and outside protected areas, and begin devoting more attention to understanding ecosystems of which humans are an integral component" (1996:748).

<sup>18</sup> What can be imagined are different ways for protecting important environmental resources while also supporting the livelihoods of local people. Nepal offers several interesting cases. In Sagamatha National Park, existing Sherpa villages have been able to continue many of their customary agropastoral activities while adding to their economic activity participation in the tourism industry. All of this has been done in a manner argued to be compatible with the conservation goals of the Park (Stevens 1993, 1997). Nepal has pioneered the use of a two-part strategy in which some areas are designated as parks, where little or no livelihood activities are permitted, while adjacent areas are designated as conservation areas in which local people can pursue their livelihood activities in ways that are environmentally sustainable. One well known case is the Annapurna Conservation Area Program (Stevens 1997). These ideas also are being debated in India as reported in the volume by Kothari et al. (1996).

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<sup>14</sup> A good introduction to ACAP is provided by Stevens (1997).

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps livestock has been the backbone of local livelihoods; however, "[t]he main source of cash income for local residents is now the harvest and sale of wild plants, and to a lesser degree, bird and mammal products" (DeCoursey 1998:10).

<sup>16</sup> Tucker (1997:37) indicates that these summer flocks mostly come from the Outer Seraj area of Kulu District, a mountainous and poor region adjacent and south of Inner Seraj where the EZ is located. These village pastoralists are not eligible for the ecodevelopment assistance intended for their neighbors in the EZ hamlets.



being pursued in the EZ with what is happening in villages in the main Kulu Valley as reported by Sharma (1996) and Berkes and Gardner (1997). In the villages of the main valley, change is being driven by the horticulture economy, both orchards and the new vegetable production. The expansion of horticultural activities has reduced the land devoted to producing food grains and shifted the preferred forms of animal production. The state has not extinguished grazing rights, though many private landowners no longer welcome grazing on their property. The economic situation has improved for the settled cultivators but not for the transhumant pastoralists. Some pastoralists are opting to switch to other livelihood activities.

In the EZ, some cultivators and villages have been able to respond positively to the horticulture options and already have decreased their dependence upon forest resources, including those within the GHNP. Those who have not yet responded should be encouraged to do so, perhaps with more direct assistance from the Horticulture Department and related organizations.<sup>19</sup> Similar efforts might be required in the base hamlets from which the transient herders come to the GHNP each summer. The key point is that supporting change in these EZ hamlets requires more effort than that of the Forest Department alone.

By making horticulture, including the cultivation of medicinal plants, an attractive economic alternative, a more gradual and natural decrease in herding activities may occur.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, both groups of hamlets will continue to need assistance in preparing to participate in a CBET-approach to tourism, such as making investments in locally owned services and businesses and training people to be involved in tourism related services. Moreover, helping direct the traditional weaving skills of local women toward marketable products and established marketing outlets, such as one or more of the well established weaving cooperatives, should be pursued (see Chhatre, Saberwal and Chhatre, this volume, for more on the GHNP situation).

### Tunnels and Turbines

A frequent scene throughout Himachal is the traditional water-powered mill used for grinding corn, wheat, and other grains. It uses so-called run-of-the-river technology: water is diverted from a fast-flowing stream into a raceway that directs a powerful flow of water to the simple turbine to which the mill stones are attached. Analogous run-of-the-

river facilities are used or planned to power large and small hydroelectric power stations in many locations in the state. This technology avoids the need to create huge reservoirs and high dams, though smaller diversion structures and reservoirs sometimes are needed. However, massive tunnels are constructed to move the water from its diversion point to a location where sufficient head is available to power the generators.

In recent years the state has made the building of hydroelectric power stations a new thrust in their plans for economic development. While some of this new electric power will be used within Himachal—certainly this will be true for the smaller installations—it appears that much of it will be sold in neighboring states. With some caveats, it represents a modern and smart use of an old natural resource—volumes of water moving at a rapid speed. In a number of cases the government is turning to the private sector to invest in these projects.<sup>21</sup>

There are currently three large hydroelectric projects being constructed in the Kulu Valleys: the Larji, which is located on the border of Kulu and Mandi districts and will divert water from the Beas; the Malana, which is diverting water from Malana stream to a location near the village of Jari in the Parvati Valley; and the Parvati project which is diverting water from the Parvati to a location near the village of Sainj in the Sainj Valley.

The Parvati project, comprised of three sub-projects, has received considerable attention from the environmental community. This project had been around for a long time but with the election of the new government in 1998 steps were taken to quickly settle outstanding matters. While a portion of the proposed GHNP consisting of about 10 square kilometers was removed from the protected area to allow construction of this hydroelectric facility to proceed, the state government attempted to justify this decision on the basis of sparing two small hamlets located in this area from removal.<sup>22</sup>

The growth of a new urban node in the area of Sainj is another aspect of the Parvati project that may have even greater impact in the Kulu Valleys. The village of Sainj is

<sup>19</sup> It is perhaps significant that while there are several horticultural research stations in the main Kulu Valley there is none in either the Tirthan or Sainj valleys.

<sup>20</sup> Part of the problem is the poor state of roads in this area. The *Tribune* (October 16, 2000) quoted a spokesman for the Lower Kulu Fruit Growers Association complaining about transportation difficulties in the Sainj Valley.

<sup>21</sup> The *Tribune* reported on December 9, 2000 that the Himachal government had signed MOUs with 30 private companies to construct 39 small hydroelectric projects – 9 in Kulu district. And on December 16 it was reported that government would aid these firms in helping to prepare the reports necessary to obtain environmental clearances.

<sup>22</sup> This area is now a combination of reserved and protected forests. Environmentalists are concerned about both the precedent that this action has set for future protected areas and the specific environmental resources that have lost protection. There is some indication that this decision by government influenced the World Bank's decision not to continue its financing to the GHNP.

presently home to about 2000 people. The Parvati project is in the process of building staff housing in Sainj for 6000 people. Nearly all of these workers will come from outside Kulu, many from outside Himachal. The project already has introduced a large group of transient workers, and the eventual establishment of this permanent staff is likely to have large implications locally. Conflicts regarding a possible shift in local government from rural *panchayats* to an urban municipality may result. Discrepancies between the school and health facilities provided for the project staff and those available to local people, and greater stratification of wealth and income between the newcomers and the older residents are likely. Of course the project is not all bad, but it does require attention to various means by which the outside entity, the project, can extend benefits to this community and region rather than being an enclave to itself. Similar points can be made regarding the Malana Project and its location in the tiny village of Jari.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, one can note that these local hosts of the large-scale hydroelectric projects are likely to receive few direct benefits unless the State uses some of the earnings from these facilities to directly invest in these and other areas. In the rough and tumble of the Indian democracy, this requires strong and articulate representatives of the affected constituents. In a highly predictable move, the state government recently announced that it would set aside some of the small hydroelectric projects to be managed by cooperatives that would be in a position to employ educated youth from the state. While this is an interesting suggestion, it would seem to be only a small solution to the larger issue of directing benefits to local areas.

### Kulu Clouds

It is doubtful that the Kulu Valleys ever deserved the cognomen that Harcourt (1871) reported—"the end of the inhabited world." For many, it has never been the end of the line, but rather the hub of a social and economic network that reaches out in many directions. What Singh (1998) described for the past seems largely to apply today. The Kulu Valleys and the neighboring regions of Himachal have built on of the physical diversity of these places to construct a regional economy. This economy is based on a network of trade and exchange that at one and the same time takes from particular localities the items they produce with their natural resource base while also allowing those localities to overcome certain limitations of their habitat by acquiring other items in short supply. Thus, a great strength of these mountainous regions has been the socially

constructed institutions connecting disparate people and places and scattered resources. Of course, even these intricate networks fail to reach some hinterland places or connect with them only poorly and partially. But it is these network connections that are at the core of both the quotidian and extraordinary changes in the Kulu Valleys.

The changes in the Kulu Valleys are advanced through technology, outside investment, restrictive and facilitating state and national policies, global and environmental imperatives, market opportunities, and biophysical processes. Each of these connects, effectively or not, with local social capital, natural resources, and people's values.

It also is useful to note the serendipity of some of the large changes in the Kulu Valleys. One major, but unanticipated event was the Chinese incursion into the eastern Himalayas in 1962. Subsequent defense spending led to the development of roads in the mountainous border areas between India and China and resulted in connecting Manali and Kulu to a highway network that vastly improved opportunities for people and things to move between the Kulu Valleys and the rest of India. The more recent crisis in Kashmir, while not unpredictable, was unexpected in the sense that the officials of Himachal could not plan for tourism development in the Kulu valleys on the basis that Kashmir would fall prey to war and violence. Without this turn of events, tourism development in Manali no doubt would have continued, but at a far slower pace than has been the case.

Today the Kulu Valleys continue to be largely agricultural, but a new kind of agricultural district in which non-agricultural economic activities are firmly embedded. As in the past, new crops and techniques are continuing to replace the old and the shift toward market production continues to unfold. Tourism, especially in the Kulu-Manali area, has grown exponentially. A significant portion of the Kulu Valleys has become the Great Himalayan National Park with large implications for the livelihoods of people in the adjacent communities. And large and small hydroelectric projects are planned or underway in several locations. Some early examinations of these changes and transformations suggest that there are both economic and environmental gains. But there also are many inhabitants of these valleys who are not benefiting from these changes and could be considered the "other" Kulu. And new risks to the environment keep emerging, including solid waste management, high rates of pesticide use, and degrading of riparian habitats. Nonetheless, while there are persistent problems to be resolved, including the possible persistent impoverishment of the EZ villagers, the evidence does not suggest a current crisis of either poverty or despoilment of the environment.

Much work is still needed in the Kulu Valleys, even with today's actions. The Kulu Valleys are layered with

<sup>23</sup> A private firm, Rajasthan Spinning, and Weaving Mills Limited is building the Malana Project. Sinclair and Diduck (1999) report that the power generated will be used at this firm's factories in Rajasthan.

the sacred domains of the village gods, the remnants of past government policies and programs, earlier property regimes and constructed landscapes, such as grazing areas, grain fields, and apple orchards. As with upland and mountainous regions elsewhere, the present state of the Kulu Valleys reflects both its actual and remembered past and its imagined and intended future.

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